

Robert Strange of St. James Episcopal Church was informed that a mob was going to the jail and was asked to stop them because lynching men in jail would be a “lasting disgrace” to the town. Strange helped place men from Fayetteville around the jail and then talked the matter over with Waddell who was also on hand. Strange, Waddell, Moore and other leaders remained at the jail until daybreak because the mob repeatedly attempted to lure the guards away from the jail just long enough to break in and kidnap those inside. These leaders obviously felt that their presence at the jail would be the only deterrent to such activity. Strange remarked concerning the riot and events at the jail: “[W]e saw what was needed and what could have happened and when we think of what did happen, we all know that it was the best managed thing that ever did happen.”¹²

The black men who spent the night in the jail were marched under guard by Morton’s Naval Reserves to the train station early in the morning.¹³ According to the

News and Observer, the men were given tickets to Richmond and told to never return to North Carolina.¹⁴ As for the men sent from the city, it is a useful exercise to understand the background of those taken into custody and targeted for banishment as

after the event explained his actions and provided insight into his conflicted attitudes towards the city’s blacks: “You misunderstood me if you thought I meant the negro, as a race, any harm and you would have known I had no ill feelings against them, as a race, if you had seen me taking them home that day – “it is a long walk from Hilton river bridge to 8th & Dawson – but I started from the bridge with about 25 & delivered the last one at 8th & Dawson of course I searched them under cover of my gun & had to take them through the picket lines on the battlefield. I had to escort one of the meanest niggers of all out of town on the train & would not have hesitated to kill him if he had attempted to escape – and yet his life had been promised him & I simply requested to go for his protection – By the way that was the reason I happened to be at the RR bridge at Hilton – the train was stopped there for me to get off. I don’t hesitate to say I think it would have been better that some of those allowed to leave should have been killed instead & yet I hardly now think you could imagine I mean to do them any harm. They have not been treated as brutes – of course some have suffered on account of their fears but they have been generally well treated. Of course I didn’t shoot at any of them – but would not have hesitated a moment to do so if I had been fired on or if any of those I saw fired on had been outnumbered. I could not bring myself to the point of firing at any of those I saw shot down even though I knew they had been doing all they could to kill white people. I am however sorry that some of those sent out of town were not killed at the time captured. One goes through peculiar changes of feeling at such times – one minute ready to shoot a negro & the next seeing one home safely to keep him from being shot. No – I personally did very little guard duty – as I was in charge of my block & simply detailed the others on the block each night & went off scouting on my own hook & helping out whenever I could. The whole town was so well organized that the military were free to go to the seat of war and the boys behaved like veterans and not anyone flinched under fire or failed in his duty.” James S. Worth to Josephine, James W. Worth Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.

¹⁴ *News and Observer* (Raleigh), November 12, 1898.

¹² Roger Moore’s widow recounted Moore’s roll in the scenario at the jail: “At night, when a wild surging mob congregated in front of the jail for the purpose of lynching the wretches who were placed there for safe keeping, it was Col. Moore who saved their lives and the city from a stain that would have sullied her fair name for all time. Every effort was made by the mob to get rid of him, even subterfuge was resorted to but without avail. Finally he said ‘Men we may as well understand each other; you are here to lynch these men and I am here to prevent it; you can only carry out your purpose over my dead body’ and mounting the steps of the jail and placing his back to the door he stood there from 10 o’clock at night until sunrise.” Letter to the editor, Mrs. Roger Moore, n.d., Mrs. Roger Moore Collection, University of North Carolina at Wilmington Library; Hayden, *WLI*, 101; *Wilmington Messenger*, 11-14-1898; Clawson, “Recollections and Memories;” “Minutes of the Association of the WLI,” North Carolina Collection.

¹³ Wilmington resident James S. Worth participated in the march to protect at least one banished African American man and escorted others to their homes from the outskirts of the city. His letter to his wife